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amnesty international

International Secretariat, 10 Southampton Street, London WC2E 7HF, England
Telephone: 01-836 7788 Telegrams: Amnesty London Telex: 28502

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EL SALVADOR
MM/IO/JZ

24 June 1980

Mr. Edmund Muskie
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington,D.C. 20520
U.S.A.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/GDC/MR
REVIEWED BY ____ DATE ____
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REASONS ____

Dear Secretary Muskie,

In connection with the impending Congressional hearings on next year's United States foreign assistance program, I would like to express our dismay at the proposed security assistance for El Salvador requested for fiscal year 1981. Amnesty International opposes security transfers where it is reasonable to believe they will contribute directly to human rights violations within its mandate- in the Salvadorean context, this includes torture, arbitrary imprisonment and summary execution on a massive scale.

We first expressed our concern on this matter in a letter of 29 February 1980 from Amnesty International Secretary General Martin Ennals to Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher. Our concern was that the security assistance then proposed would contribute negatively to the already serious human rights situation in El Salvador. We have received no reply, as yet.

We at that time requested clarification of the precise nature and intent of the proposed assistance, and its proposed recipients, pointing out that the Salvadorean security system as a whole, whether nominally military, police or paramilitary, performs the internal security functions that have resulted in most of the torture, disappearances and executions that are our major concerns in El Salvador.

Since the 3 January 1980 resignation of much of the Salvadorean government -on human rights grounds- at least 2,000 Salvadoreans have been killed or "disappeared" while in the hands of conventional and auxiliary security forces of El Salvador. Many were tortured and savagely mutilated- arms lopped off, flayed, beheaded.

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Amnesty International is a worldwide human rights movement which works impartially for the release of prisoners of conscience: men and women detained anywhere for their beliefs, colour, ethnic origin, sex, religion or language, provided they have neither used nor advocated violence. Amnesty International opposes torture and the death penalty in all cases without reservation and advocates fair and prompt trials for all political prisoners. Amnesty International is independent of all governments, political factions, ideologies, economic interests and religious creeds. It is financed by its membership and by subscriptions from all parts of the world. Amnesty International has consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC), UNESCO and the Council of Europe, has cooperative relations with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States, and has observer status with the Organization of African Unity (Bureau for the Placement and Education of African Refugees).

Salvadorean church sources have documented 2,065 cases of persons summarily killed by security forces for their association, or presumed association, with political opposition groups, peasant leagues, or industrial trade unions. You may recall the State Department's 8 February 1979 "502B" report on human rights commented (at page 233) that "peasant or rural mass organizations, with the exceptions of the Union Comunal Salvadoreno (UCS) and the government-dominated ORDEN, are considered to be subversive and extra-illegal." This perception still exists.

In the cities, membership of a union, a neighborhood association, a church group or a political party can also be seen as subversive and so makes one liable to detention and murder. In the past weeks doctors have been arrested and killed in the course of surgical operations; hospital patients helpless in bed or on the operating table have been abducted or detained and killed. The arbitrary detention and outright murder of health workers and the sick have motivated a national doctor's strike.

Given all this it is indeed reasonable to expect that assistance intended to improve the operational capabilities of the Salvadorean security system, including training and material assistance, will contribute to worsen the human rights situation in that country.

We hope you will review the situation of human rights in El Salvador, as detailed in Amnesty International's submission to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of 21 March 1980, a copy of which is attached, and in the reports periodically prepared by our organization, by the Salvadorean Commission on Human Rights, and by Roman Catholic Church organizations in El Salvador.

In the light of the seriousness of the human rights situation there, we wish to conclude by urging very strongly that your government reconsider its proposed military and security assistance for El Salvador.

Respectfully and sincerely,

Zalaquett

José Zalaquett,
Chairman,
International Executive Committee,
Amnesty International

cc. Mr. Frank Church, Chairman, Senate Foreign Relations Committee;
Mr. Jamie Whitten, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee;
Mr. Clement Zablocki, Chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Mr. Warren Magnuson, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee;
Mr. David Hinkley, Chairman, Amnesty International of the U.S.A.;
Ms. Patricia Rengel, Director, Amnesty International, Washington O